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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Security Administration

AGRICULTURAL WAR PROGRAMS INVOLVING FARM LABOR

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Agriculture achieved a position of first importance in the war effort when authority was delegated to the Secretary of Agriculture over the Nation's food program and farm labor resources. Herein shall be presented in broad outline the scope and authority of the major agricultural war programs involving farm labor.

Nation's Food Program

In order to assure an adequate supply and efficient distribution of food to meet war and essential civilian needs, the President delegated authority December 5, 1942 to the Secretary of Agriculture over the Nation's food program.

Full responsibility has been given the Secretary to ascertain food requirements, to carry out a program necessary to furnish such requirements, assign food priorities and make purchases to the extent necessary.

The scope of the food program extends to the production and distribution of all commodities consumed by humans and animals. The Executive Order defines food to mean "all commodities and products, simple, mixed, or compound, or complements to such commodities or products that are or may be eaten or drunk by either humans or animals, irrespective of other uses to which such commodities or products may be put, and at all stages of processing from the raw commodity to the product thereof in a vendible form for immediate human or animal consumption, but exclusive of such commodities and products as the Secretary shall determine. For the purposes of this Executive Order, the term 'food' shall also include all starches, sugars, vegetable and animal fats and oils, cotton, tobacco, wool, hemp, flax fiber, and such other agricultural commodities and products as the President may designate."

Farm Labor Mobilization

For the purpose of promoting more effective mobilization and utilization of available labor the War Manpower Commission on January 25, 1943, delegated authority to the Secretary of Agriculture over the Nation's farm labor resources.

Operating responsibility has been given the Secretary for recruiting and placing farm labor, the determining of need and areas of supply, the transportation of farm workers to shortage areas and the determination of essential crops.

Agricultural labor extends to all workers concerned with or incident to regular farming operations but does not include labor for manufacturing or commercial operations, such as processing, packing, canning, transporting and marketing farm products.

The War Manpower Commission directive defines agriculture as follows: "...farm activities or services carried on by, or performed for, farm owners or tenants on farms in connection with the cultivation of the soil, the harvesting of crops, or the raising, feeding, or management of livestock, bees, and poultry, and shall not include any packing and canning processing, transportation or marketing of articles produced on farms unless performed or carried on as an incident to ordinary farming operations as distinguished from manufacturing or commercial operations."

Deferment of Agricultural Workers

The Selective Service Act of 1940, as amended, provides for the deferment of farm workers between the ages of 18 and 45. Policy responsibility rests with the War Manpower Commission and the Selective Service System. The Department of Agriculture aids in determining essential crops and the number of war units required for deferment. However, decisions on specific deferments are made by local draft boards.

Congress has stipulated deferment of every registrant found by a local draft board to be necessary to and regularly engaged in an agricultural occupation or endeavor essential to the war effort. It has been administratively determined that a person must through his own personal and direct efforts be responsible for the production of 16 war units of essential farm products to be eligible for deferment. While the objective is 16 war units, under certain conditions as little as 8 war units would justify deferment.

Farm products determined essential to the war effort and upon which war units are credited for purposes of deferment are as follows:

- I. LIVESTOCK AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS: Beef cattle, dairy cattle, hogs, poultry, sheep and goats.
- II. FIBER, OIL CROPS AND POTATOES: (1) Castor beans; (2) cotton: (a) American-Egyptian, Sea Island and Upland 15/16 inch and over, (b) Upland under 15/16 inch; (3) flaxseed and soybeans; (4) hemp; and (5) peanuts, Irish potatoes and sweet potatoes.
- III. FIELD CROPS: (1) Alfalfa hay (irrigated), broom corn, corn for grain and silage, dry edible beans, green peas for processing, rice, sweet corn for processing; (2) alfalfa hay seed, cover crop seed, nonirrigated alfalfa hay, grain sorghum, other tame hay and seed; (3) barley, dry field peas, oats and rye; (4) sweet corn for fresh consumption and hybrid seed corn; (5) wild or native hay; and (6) wheat.
- IV. FRUITS: (1) Plants and trees for fruit production and camouflage; (2) small fruit and berries; and (3) tree fruit (deciduous and citrus): (a) bearing orchard (irrigated); (b) non-bearing orchard.

- V. MEDICINAL, INSECTICIDE AND RUBBER PLANTS
- VI. WOOD PRODUCTS
- VII. NAVAL STORES
- VIII. VEGETABLES FOR FRESH CONSUMPTION AND PROCESSING: Asparagus (from present plantings, beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, chard, cauliflower, collards, escarole, green leafy lettuce, green pascal celery, green peas for fresh consumption only, peppers, kale, lima beans, mustard greens, onions, parsnips, rutabaga, snapbeans, spinach, tomatoes, and turnips.
- IX. VEGETABLE PLANTS AND SEEDS
- X. OTHER FOOD AND SPECIAL CROPS: (1) Honey, (2) tree nuts (bearing orchards), (3) tree nuts (nonbearing orchards and replacement stock), (4) sugar cane for sugar and syrup, (5) sugar beets, sugar beet seed, sorghum and sorgo syrup, and (6) tobacco.

Agricultural Wage Policies

The Wage-Price Control Act of October 2, 1942 authorizes and directs the President to stabilize prices, wages and salaries as far as practicable on the basis of the levels which existed on September 15, 1942. Adjustments are allowed to the extent necessary to aid in the prosecution of the war and to correct gross inequities.

The President through Executive Order 9250 established the Office of Economic Stabilization to carry out the Government's anti-inflationary program. In an attempt to stabilize farm employment Economic Stabilization Director Byrnes issued a directive empowering the Secretary of Agriculture to pursue a wage policy in agriculture which would retain and attract labor to the farms.

The directive stipulates that no employer shall decrease wages or salaries paid agricultural labor below the highest rate for such work between January 1, 1942 and September 15, 1942, without the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Due to substandard wages in agriculture, the disparity in wages between agriculture and industry and the need to stabilize the labor force in agriculture, the ceiling on farm wages has been lifted until such time as the Secretary decides that such increases shall be reviewed by the Department. Provision is made for public notice of the determination that with respect to areas, crops, classes of employers or otherwise, wage and salary increases may no longer be made without the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Under the directive agricultural labor means persons engaged on farms and producing agricultural commodities whose salary or wage payments are not in excess of \$2400 per annum.

Any individual or association of individuals convicted of wilfully violating any provisions of the Act or regulations issued thereunder are subject to a fine of not more than \$1000 or to imprisonment for not more than one year, or to both.

(See attached chart on agricultural war programs involving farm labor.)

Scope and Authority of Agricultural War Programs Affecting Farm Labor

	AUTHORITY	POLICY	SCOPE
Nation's Food Program	Full responsibility to Secretary through Executive Order dated December 5, 1942.	1. Ascertain nation's food requirements 2. Furnish food requirements 3. Assign food priorities 4. Make food purchases.	Produce and distribute all commodities consumed by humans and animals.
Farm Labor Mobilization	Operating responsibility to the Secretary of Agriculture through War Manpower Commission Directive dated January 25, 1943.	1. Recruit and place farm labor 2. Determine areas of need and supply 3. Transport workers 4. Determine essential crops.	All labor concerned with or incident to regular farming operations but does not include labor for manufacturing or commercial operations.
Deferment of Agricultural workers	Under Selective Service Act of 1940 authority on policy rests with the War Manpower Commission with advice of Secretary of Agriculture on essential crops. Deferment decisions made by local draft board.	1. Defer farm labor in order to make more workers available to agriculture. 2. Each worker deferred must produce not less than 8 and up to 16 units of war essential crops	Workers necessary to and regularly engaged in an agricultural occupation or endeavor essential to the war effort
Agricultural Wage Policies	Authority to Secretary of Agriculture through directive from the Office of Economic Stabilization dated November 30, 1942	Wage policy to stabilize farm employment 1. No decrease in wages without approval of Secretary of Agriculture 2. Wage increases allowed until such time as the Secretary decides to review them	Persons engaged on farms and producing agricultural commodities whose wage payments are not in excess of \$2400 per annum.

